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SUBJECT: GUIDANCE FOR G-8 BIOTERRORISM EXPERTS GROUP  
WORKSHOP IN TOKYO - MARCH 12-13, 2009

11. (U) This message provides guidance for the U.S. delegation to the U.S. delegation to the G-8 Bioterrorism Experts Group (BTEX) workshop in Tokyo, March 12-13, 2009.

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SUMMARY  
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12. (SBU) The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Disarmament, Nonproliferation and Science - Chemical and Biological Weapons Division, will host a BTEX workshop in Tokyo March 12-13, 2009 on 'Sharing Lessons Learned for Advanced Management of Biological Threats.' The purpose of the workshop will be to have G-8 nations share lessons learned and experiences related to national exercises on bioterrorism preparedness and response. Japan also hopes the workshop will contribute new ideas for future BTEX discussions. USDEL will be comprised of representatives from the Departments of State, Health and Human Services (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

13. (SBU) In addition to sharing lessons learned from U.S. bioterrorism exercises, USDEL will informally explore options to reinvigorate the BTEX forum with a view to advancing interagency agreed core areas upon completion of Administration policy review. END SUMMARY.

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BACKGROUND  
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14. (SBU) BTEX was formed in 2004 under the U.S. G-8 Presidency to strengthen collective action to prevent and respond to bioterrorism. It was envisioned as an international exchange involving foreign policy, homeland security, health, agriculture, law enforcement and defense experts from G-8 countries. BTEX is intended to report directly to the G-8 Nonproliferation Directors Group (NPDG), which meets approximately four times a year prior to the July G-8 Summit, with another meeting following the Summit. In practice, BTEX has held a series of useful workshops and exercises, but has not had substantial policy-level dialogue feeding into the NPDG in several years.

15. (SBU) At the Sea Island Summit in 2004 and the Gleneagles Summit in 2005, G-8 leaders emphasized: strengthening national and international biosurveillance capabilities,

increasing protection of the global food supply, and improving bioterrorism response and mitigation capabilities for G-8 efforts to defend against bioterrorism. Since 2004, BTEX work plans have been developed following these objectives, with a series of workshops and exercises on decontamination, joint law enforcement-public health investigations, and food defense. END BACKGROUND.

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MEETING GUIDANCE  
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¶6. (SBU) U.S. PRESENTATION: Drawing on an interagency-coordinated presentation, USDEL should brief BTEX participants on lessons learned from U.S. national table-top exercises on bioterrorism preparedness and response as well as from after-action analysis of actual events. As requested by Japan, the presentation on lessons learned will cover the following areas: detection and identification of biological threats, vaccination and countermeasure distribution, cooperation and coordination among national agencies cooperation between national authorities and local authorities and risk communication.

¶7. (SBU) BTEX REVITALIZATION: While BTEX has performed much useful work, our sense is that interest in BTEX among G-8 members is uneven and lower than the U.S. would like. During the workshop, USDEL should informally ask other participants about how to make BTEX more useful and how to engage Russia more effectively in the BTEX process. In particular:

-- (SBU) USDEL should gauge interest level from other participants for continued work in the current areas (food defense, decontamination, and forensic epidemiology), interest in addressing new topics related to domestic detection and response, and interest in expanding the mandate of the group to more explicitly include prevention-related topics, such as laboratory biosecurity.

-- (SBU) USDEL should emphasize that BTEX should complement, but not duplicate the ongoing discussions and activities of multilateral initiatives, such as the 1540 Committee, Biological Weapons Convention, and the Ministerial level G-7 plus Mexico Global Health Security Initiative. Participants considering expansion of the BTEX mandate should bear this objective in mind.

¶8. (SBU) U.S. IDEAS FOR BTEX'S FUTURE: USDEL should informally elicit responses from BTEX participants on their interest in current BTEX discussion topics and future areas of discussion. USDEL may outline the following illustrative ideas to provoke discussion:

-- (SBU) Expanded scope: USDEL should suggest that the scope of BTEX be expanded to include preventing bioterrorism. This would be useful as discussions to date have focused on detection and response.

-- (SBU) Narrower Focus and Annual Workplans: USDEL should also suggest BTEX adopt one or two topics at the beginning of each year to focus discussion and activities on. The objective would be to have the results of workshops and meetings identify recommendations that could be included in summit documents.

-- (SBU) Policy Meetings: USDEL should suggest that BTEX should hold policy discussions more often, potentially twice a year on the margins of NPDG meetings. These meetings would set the agenda and direction of upcoming workshops and exercises, and also serve as a vehicle to convey important policy points to the NPDG for possible reflection in Summit documents. One policy meeting each year could be devoted to prevention topics and the other to detection and response topics.

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RED LINES  
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¶9. (SBU) SMALLPOX: USDEL will avoid discussion about the retention of the two World Health Organization authorized smallpox repositories (in the U.S. and Russia) within the G-8. The U.S. reserves discussion of this topic for the World Health Assembly and bilateral discussions.

¶10. (SBU) SYNTHETIC DNA: USDEL will avoid any discussion within the G-8 of synthetic DNA, which may be perceived by the developing world as an edict on how it should manage its policies in the areas of synthetic biology. With nations such as China and India emerging as leaders in the field of DNA synthesis, the U.S. must ensure that ongoing bilateral discussions on this topic take precedence and inform the G-8, rather the other way around.

CLINTON